

February 8th, 2023

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is David Weinreb, and I am a bilingual educator, community organizer, and LGBTQ advocate from New Haven. I am also the Co-Chair for the Ward 14 Democratic Town Committee. I am a documented insured patient of my local federally qualified health center, Fair Haven Community Health Care. I stand in support of HB 6616; if this bill is passed, we have the opportunity to invest in the success of our newcomer students, increase access to gender-affirming care for undocumented LGBTQ youth, and strengthen the overall health and wellness of our neighborhoods.

I've been working as an educator, working with new immigrant students, since 2010. While working at the Fair Haven School, five blocks from my home, here in the Latinx-majority community of New Haven, I was privileged to teach 5th and 6th grade Spanish-speaking newcomers, many of whom were undocumented children from Guatemala, Mexico, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic. They are brilliant young people with incredible life experiences and families who care deeply about their children's education, health, and wellbeing. They and their families also have tremendous unmet needs, neglected and exacerbated by an inability to access healthcare. Many have experienced significant trauma in their journeys, and if their mental health challenges are not addressed, they distract and derail students and their families from academic success. Many also suffer from a variety of untreated chronic medical conditions, the symptoms and pain of which impact students' attention, attendance, and of course, their health. I have worked with parents who are trying to access healthcare, but their provider options, services, and medications are limited or prohibitively expensive, appointments are sparsely available, concern regarding documentation discrimination pervades, and the consequence is that the families of our children, some of the strongest most persistent people I have ever met, struggle to succeed.

I am also a founder and lead organizer for the City of New Haven LGBTQ Youth Task Force. Through this work, we have learned of the many challenges faced by LGBTQ-identifying teenagers in schools, including their ability to identify welcoming providers and to access gender-affirming care. Building LGBTQ-affirming schools is not enough. Until undocumented LGBTQ teens are able to access HUSKY, many will struggle mightily to survive, and cannot access the variety of services and supports they need to thrive in their schools, homes, and in their communities.

We can work to fix this. We can pass HB 6616, and help teenagers and their families access the mental health services as well as the regular, consistent medical care they need. We can pass HB 6616, and help undocumented LGBTQ youth access the resources and advocacy they need to lead healthy, open, safe, and meaningful lives. I support HB6616 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. For the future, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time,

David Weinreb

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Pronouns: he/him/his

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